

SPECIAL EVENTS AND PROJECTS

In 1937 the first co-operative programs were started. In 1940 the branches once again took up war work - knitting, sewing, raising money, sending boxes of comforts to the soldiers overseas. In 1942 the first training school program came into effect - "The Renovation of Clothing".

In 1950 West Elgin sponsored the oratorical contests in the public schools. This was in co-operation with the Trustees and Ratepayers Association and continued until 1963 when the Association took over the project as it did in other counties.

In 1951 the East and West Elgin Districts raised \$2000 for a Centennial Scholarship for the girl attaining most honors, school, Club work, and other activities. This was the Elgin County Centennial Scholarship. As this was Elgin County's Centennial year, the Institutes joined other organizations in their celebration. Many members took part in the "Spectacle" - a pageant of Elgin's history. A Centennial Tea was held at Anderson's store when antiques and quilts were displayed. The Institute had a booth at Athletic Park.

In 1953 on August 21st, it was Canada Day at Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto where the A.C.W.W. met for its triennial convention and many attended from West Elgin.

ELGIN COUNTY WOMEN'S INSTITUTE RALLIES

At the forty-fifth District Annual held in Paynes Mills Hall on May 25th, 1953, a committee was formed comprising of the District president, first and second vice-president, secretary, and Federated Representative, to meet with a like committee from East Elgin to administer affairs pertaining to the East and West Elgin District W. I. Mrs. Stanley Lyle was the District president at that time and was elected Chairman of the newly formed organization.

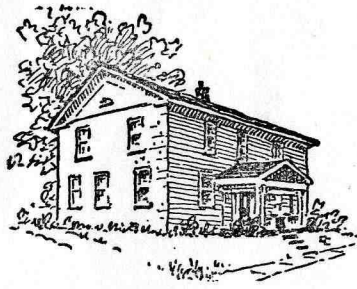
In the summer of 1954 the county Institute committee arranged for the get-together to meet Madam Coomaswamy, A.C.W.W. delegate to the triennial Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World. Madam Coomaswamy was presented with the gift of a pin at the luncheon at Fort Stanley.

The first Rally was held in October, 1956 in Union United Church with Mrs. Reg. Young of East Elgin presiding. The meeting commenced with a luncheon.

The second Rally was held in Union United Church with Mrs. Osbert Hindley presiding, in October 1959. Mrs. George Wilson was the speaker.

The third Rally was held in Knox Presbyterian Church, St. Thomas. ¹⁹⁶² The luncheon was prepared by the County Circle of Knox Ladies Aid. Mrs. Harvey Wales of Komoka gave an illustrated talk on the F.W.I.C. Conference in British Columbia. At this meeting the farm poster winners were given their awards of shields. Mrs. J. D. Galbraith, County Rally Chairman presided. The Triple Trio from Wallacetown provided music.

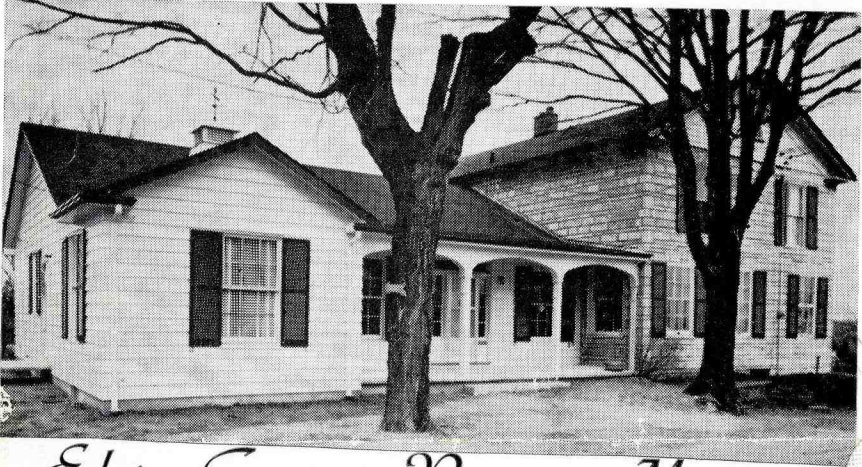
The fourth County Rally was held in Grace United Church, St. Thomas on Oct. 18th, 1965, with Mrs. Gowan Young presiding. The speaker was Mrs. L. G. Lymburner who also showed pictures of New Zealand and Japan. The Farm Safety poster awards were presented by Mrs. Bert Hindley to Barbara Roberts, Aylmer, Senior Champion, David Brown, Shedden, Intermediate Champion, and Jane Learn, Aylmer, Junior Champion. Miss Elaine McGregor, R.3, St. Thomas, was presented with the Elgin County Centennial Scholarship.



ELGIN COUNTY PIONEER MUSEUM

West Elgin Homeis Institute
Sept 25, 1963

Talbot de Malahide



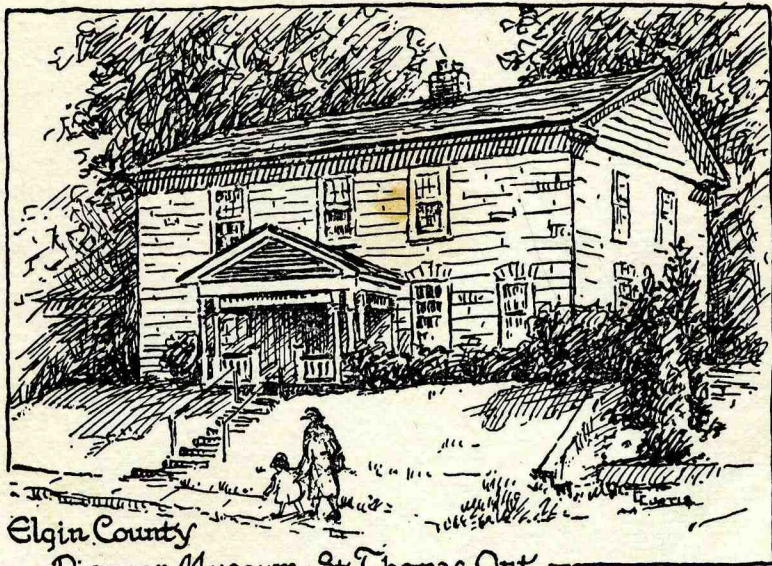
Elgin County Pioneer Museum

Unveiling and Dedication
Historical Plaques
Talbot Road, West
Elgin County, Ontario

The Honourable John Rolph, M.D.
1793-1870
The Talbot Road

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 2nd, 1960
AT 2:30 P.M.

MIDDLEMARCH WOMEN'S INSTITUTE HALL



Elgin County
Pioneer Museum, St. Thomas, Ont.

The Talbot Settlement Anniversary Dinner

in the

Colonel Talbot Room
GRAND CENTRAL HOTEL
ST. THOMAS, ONTARIO

Friday, 18th May, 1962

at 7:00 p.m.



"On the 21st day of May in each year, the back woodsman abandoned his toil, threw by his axe, and took his partner under his arm to the anniversary. The ample board groaned under such substantial fare as the settlement could afford and after the cloth was removed, a hundred rustic voices responded to the King's health. 'The day and all who honor it,' elicited a stentorian shout which made the welkin ring and 'The Honourable Thomas Talbot, founder of the Talbot Settlement,' was drowned in bumpers amidst deafening cheers."

(The Life of Colonel Talbot — Edward Ermatinger)

ELGIN COUNTY PIONEER MUSEUM

At the District Annual Meeting of East and West Elgin Institutes in the spring of 1954 Mrs. J. R. Futcher, a past President of the F.W.I.O. and a member of Middlemarch W.I., proposed the Elgin County Pioneer Museum project as a natural follow-up of the writing of Tweedsmuir Histories. Thus it was hoped a link with Elgin's historic past might be provided that we might visualize and understand those pioneers who had laid the foundations of our present life.

In November of that year at a meeting including Historical Research Conveners of the Institutes of the county, representatives from city and county councils, and former Historical Society members, decided to promote a county museum, the same to be located in the county seat, the city of St. Thomas. To further the plan, in January 1955, two boards were set up, an honorary board, and an active board consisting of W.I. representatives, a representative of the former Historical Society, local historians, and interested business men. Mrs. J. R. Futcher was named executive chairman of the museum committee, and Mrs. Gowna Young, secretary.

Of special interest as a prospect for a museum was the old Saywell home situated on the brow of the West Talbot Hill, overlooking Kettle Creek valley where St. Thomas had its beginning. The house was on a site which was part of a 200 acre property for which the original crown deed had been granted to Daniel Rapelje, one of the earliest settlers of what is now St. Thomas. The present home was built on the property of Dr. Chas. Duncombe in 1848 -49 by Dr. Elijah Duncombe, brother of Dr. Charles Duncombe. Both were born in Connecticut. The latter, Dr. Charles, had come to Canada to practice medicine in 1819. With Dr. John Rolf he opened in St. Thomas the first Medical School in Upper Canada, known as the "Talbot Dispensatory". His brother Elijah joined him about 1822. Dr. Rolf later went to Toronto where he established the nucleus of the medical school of the University of Toronto. Dr. Charles Duncombe, an ardent admirer of William Lyon McKenzie, became a member of the Legislature for Oxford, and then after being involved in the Rebellion of 1837 fled to the States. Dr. Elijah continued to practise at this site and in his new home until his death in 1870.

So this historic old home and grounds were finally purchased for \$10,000. As considerable renovation was found necessary for the interior, an additional \$6,000 was entailed.

The Women's Institutes of the county held a week of teas and showing of pioneer articles at Anderson's store. Further teas and similar affairs netted \$3,300, a planned canvas of rural Elgin \$4,500, while as a result of letters having been sent to former Elgin citizens and others concerning the project, many generous donations were received. Mrs. Futcher spoke to the several I.O.D.E. Chapters of the city who undertook the canvas of the city, bringing in around \$4,000. The names of all those who thus helped make the museum a reality are preserved in the "Founders' Book"

To furnish the building from many contributions throughout the county, city, and beyond, came fine examples of furniture, china, glass, linens, clothing, and utensils found in pioneer homes. Many were treasured articles which had been brought from the homeland of their ancestors. Once again they were to be displayed in suitable settings throughout the museum rooms. Voluntary help from W.I. members and their menfolk in some of the renovation and placing of exhibits lessened considerably some of the required expenditure.

Finally on April 5th, 1957, everything was in readiness for the museum opening. Owing to limited space, the guest list on opening day was limited, but the general public was welcomed the following day. Among those officiating at the opening were Col. C. D. Crowe, Deputy Minister of Travel and Publicity in the Ontario Govt., Mr. J. Hindley, warden of the county, Mr. D. Anderson, great grandson of Dr. Elijah Duncombe, Mrs. J. R. Futcher, Mr. and Mrs. David Kennedy, curators, Mr. Leslie Gray, President of Ontario Historical Society, Mr. Wilfrid Jury, curator of Museum of Indian Archaeology and Pioneer Life, London, Mr. John Stirling, mayor of St. Thomas, Mr. G. Gray, former principal of St. Thomas Collegiate Institute, the Rev. L. Craig, President Elgin Ministerial Association, and Mrs. R. H. McNeil, who, since the County Council had accepted the ownership of the museum, presented the keys to warden Hindley.

Mrs. Futcher paid tribute to her many helpers and announced that more than \$16,000 had been raised, and a sizeable amount was on hand to be used for maintenance and probable expansion.

Prior to the opening, the Times Journal had given the event much publicity. Interesting items and photographs concerning the coming event had been featured in the paper.

It was a memorable day as the guests visited the different rooms and the exhibits displayed therein. In the dining room, a project of North Yarmouth W.I. were displayed many fine examples of early furniture, china and glass, while in